



Dr. Louis J. Agnese, Jr.  
President

February 3, 2009

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
United States House of Representatives  
2409 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Smith:

On behalf of the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW), I would like to thank you for your strong support of issues important to our institution. Your leadership continues to strengthen our national standing in many areas.

As you are aware, UIW is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institute providing education services to a diverse population of students, many of whom are first generation college students. UIW is home to the second oldest nursing program west of the Mississippi River. The majority of nurses currently serving Bexar County have graduated from our program with their bachelor's or master's degree in nursing. The Feik School of Pharmacy at UIW is the first of only five pharmaceutical schools in Texas. The school educates the second highest percentage of minority pharmacy students in the United States.

Furthermore, we are proud to announce that we are in the process of establishing a School of Optometry. UIW's School of Optometry will be only the second college-based optometry school in Texas. Moreover, it will be the only optometry school in the nation to offer a Spanish Language certification. Based upon the demographics of South Texas and consultations with professional optometrists, there is a great need for optometrists who can speak Spanish, both here and in other regions in the U.S.

This program will help to address Texas' critical need for more optometrists (ODs). The Texas Department of State Health Services determined in 2006 that there are 30,000 practicing ODs in the U.S., and only 2,690 ODs serving Texas' 23+ million residents. Moreover, 109 Texas counties are without an optometrist, and 23 of Texas' 43 border counties do not have an optometrist. Local need is even greater due to the significant prevalence of diabetic eye disease in San Antonio.

In order to meet these great needs and to continue to strengthen the programs at our institution, I respectfully request the following Eastside Eyecare Clinic funding through the FY10 Appropriations process.

**FY10 Labor, Health, & Human Services, Education Appropriations Bill:**

**Project Title:** Eastside Eyecare Clinic

**FY 09Request:** \$874,000 in the FY10 Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education Appropriations Bill (Account: Health and Human Services Sub-Account: HRSA health facilities and services program)

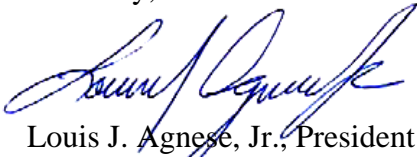
**Background:** FY10 funds are requested for equipment for the Eastside Eyecare Clinic supported by UIW's School of Optometry. UIW will provide San Antonio and other Texas communities with a greater number of trained professional optometrists to meet the population's health care needs. Specifically, UIW will open in Fall 2009 a new School of Optometry in Northwest San Antonio and in Spring 2010 a Community Eyecare Clinic on the East Side of San Antonio. These facilities will both educate new optometrists and offer clinical optometry services, especially in the field of pediatric and geriatric optometric services.

The Eastside Eyecare Clinic will be based in a new 30,000 square foot building on East Commerce Street, in the heart of the East Side of San Antonio, an area of the city that is traditionally underserved in health care. The clinic will incorporate a special emphasis on pediatric optometry with 12 fully-equipped vision care examination suites devoted to pediatric needs and vision therapy services. Approximately 15,000 eye exams will be offered to children as part of the Eastside Eyecare Clinic's pediatric and therapy services.

The long-range goal of the School of Optometry and Eastside Eyecare Clinic is to increase the number of trained, professional optometrists in Texas by 55 to 64 per year to meet the population's health care needs, particularly the large and growing Hispanic population of the region.

I appreciate your consideration of funding for this important project. Again, thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at (210) 829-3900, or Robert Sosa, Director of Foundation, Corporate, & Government Relations, at (210) 829-2752.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Louis J. Agnese, Jr.", is written over the printed name.

Louis J. Agnese, Jr., President  
University of the Incarnate Word